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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: Let me begin by thanking this institution and all who subscribe to its values and mission for providing me — and the citizens of my nation — with the opportunity to address you today.

We are gathered here at a time when the challenges and opportunities for the institution of the United Nations have rarely been greater. And at this gathering, we must ask ourselves where hope for peace and prosperity would be, if the United Nations system were not such an active presence around the globe.

My country salutes the ongoing efforts to make the United Nations even more effective and welcomes the candidacy of a Secretary-General whose competence and unique perspective on gender-equality issues will help advance that goal.

Georgia is grateful for the contributions of the United Nations, for the commitment to build peace in our region and the efforts to create new opportunities for those most in need. I look forward to a continuation and deepening of that productive cooperation.

In a few weeks time, we will be celebrating the third anniversary of the peaceful, democratic revolution that brought a new era of change and progress to Georgia and the entire region. In fact, that revolution caused reactions all over the world. Ours was a revolution that gave power to its citizens, and it did so by rebuilding the fundamental social contract upon which any democracy must rest — a contract founded on respect for the principles of transparency, accountability and responsibility.

Today, citizens of Georgia's democracy enjoy the fruits of fundamental human security, liberty, human rights and opportunity. We have changed the lives of our people, and we have done so by confronting and eliminating corruption, by fighting crime aggressively, by investing heavily in education and health care and by establishing new rules of the game — in a society where little of that existed in the past. The results of our efforts have not gone unnoticed.

In the last two months alone, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development — to name a few international institutions — have confirmed just how much Georgia has changed. Today, we are recognized as the number one reformer in the world, as one of the least corrupt States in Europe, as an outstanding place to do

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business and as a role model for other countries of the region. It is fair to say that our reforms, conducted in a part of the world where few thought they were possible, have in fact performed.

In two weeks time, we will take another step, further solidifying the institutional framework upon which our democracy rests, when we conduct local elections. We are making that important investment in our democracy because we believe in the necessity of empowering our people with the responsibility and the tools to shape their own future.

I look forward to healthy competition, transparent elections and a more vibrant democratic system. That, in our view, is the way in which we can provide our State with the capacity to protect the vulnerable and provide our citizens the means to build a better life. However, like any nation undergoing great change, we still have challenges ahead. Reform continues in the judiciary and in other spheres, local self-government is building capacity and employment remains the rightful expectation of every citizen.

Our national aspirations are, however, not parochial. We see Georgia as an active and responsible member of the international community. To protect our achievements and consolidate gains, we should face common challenges and threats together. We are doing that together with our friends, partners and allies in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, where our troops help support international efforts to defeat terrorism and build lasting peace and democracy.

Because of that commitment, we will continue to actively pursue our membership in NATO and welcome the most recent step forward, when just yesterday Georgia was invited to join in Intensified Dialogue with NATO. That is an important decisive step towards full membership. We do so because we believe democracies are stronger when they are united, and that lasting security is best achieved through alliances based on common values.

We are a European nation and that is not a recent revelation. We would in fact be denying our history if we felt — or acted — otherwise. In the next days, my Government will be signing an action plan as part of the European Union's European Neighborhood Policy. Thus, we will take another step, strengthening the bonds that unite the family of European democracies.

It is the goal of my Government to become a model European neighbour. We have learned from past European experiences that the proper and peaceful conduct of neighbourly relations is the foundation of long-term peace and prosperity. That which Europe has achieved in the last fifty years, we seek to achieve in our neighbourhood in a much shorter time. That is our collective challenge and common goal.

It will come as no surprise when we say that there are still grave obstacles to establishing lasting peace in my country. Reforms, especially when they are democratic, upset old interests and old habits. It is a simple statement of political fact that there are frequent attempts to undermine our reforms, our progress and our democratic way of life. We must all beware of those who believe that the presence of a stable democracy as a neighbour is threatening. Georgia's democracy — like all democracies around the world — does not wish to be seen as threatening.

The painful truth however, is that in Georgia today we have inherited the brutal legacy of unresolved territorial conflicts. Those conflicts undermine our stability and the stability of our region. In fact, that inherited legacy is directly responsible for the systematic abuse of the fundamental human rights of a large portion of our population. Just imagine for a moment, that children who find themselves victims of those savage events are denied the right to learn or speak their native language; that the elderly are not allowed access to adequate health care; that young people cannot receive a proper education and that hundreds of thousands of people cannot return safely to their homes where they belong, from which they were systematically ethnically cleansed and which in many cases have been illegally sold or destroyed.

Further, the painful, but factual truth is that those regions are being annexed by our neighbour to the north — the Russian Federation — which has actively supported their incorporation through a concerted policy of mass distribution of Russian passports — a policy that is in direct violation of international law and is unprecedented. There are few more poignant examples of one State seeking to annex the internationally recognized sovereign territory of another State and thus undermining the other State.

Today, I would like to ask all of you in this Hall, if any Members in this great Hall would welcome — or tolerate — such interference by another Power on their

own soil. I doubt it. Yet, this is the situation we are facing today in Georgia. These are the actions that we must confront as we seek to consolidate and defend our democracy. Let us never forget that the victims of conflicts are real people, that the climate of fear that they live in is pervasive and that their suffering must come to an end. With those conflicts, we have also inherited frameworks for peacekeeping and formats for negotiation that no longer function. Simply put — they neither promote peace nor do they encourage genuine negotiation. If the purpose of our revolution was to guarantee to all citizens of Georgia the right to participate fully in the life and decisions of the State, then our revolution remains unfinished.

Today, in Georgia's conflict zones, we do not enjoy a status quo of stability and progress; that, unfortunately, is a popular fiction. Rather, we find ourselves facing a deteriorating situation in which sponsors of crime and illegality are gaining the upper hand. Let us be clear: Georgia is a responsible democracy, and if we are to take that responsibility seriously, we must acknowledge that embracing change is the only path towards a just and lasting peace.

The shortcomings of the current peacekeeper system are well documented. A few examples, taken directly from reports provided by the United Nations and the OSCE, demonstrate how Russian-dominated forces on the ground have served to perpetuate rather than resolve the conflicts and how they have abused and made a farce of the principles of neutrality, impartiality and trust. By choice, they themselves — not we — have, in effect, annulled their own status.

Since the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia, Georgia, more than 2,000 Georgian citizens of all ethnic origins have lost their lives in this zone controlled by peacekeepers, and more than 8,000 Georgian homes have been destroyed. For more than 12 years, Russian peacekeepers have been unable to facilitate the return of more than 250,000 internally displaced persons to their homes in Abkhazia, although this is explicitly stated in their mandate.

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the OSCE have been cataloguing numerous violations involving the transfer of heavy weaponry such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery, mortar, anti-aircraft systems and cannons to the separatists, even as the Georgian Government has been taking action to unilaterally demilitarize.

Russian peacekeepers have proved unable and unwilling to take any measures to halt such violations. In fact, some of them have directly encouraged such violations and assisted in them.

In South Ossetia, 18 illegal military exercises using prohibited equipment were catalogued in the past year alone. Many involved the direct participation of Russian peacekeepers. This is all well documented. Unfortunately, the list goes on.

Imagine. In the village of Chubirkhinji, during talks sponsored by the United Nations, an 8-year-old Georgian boy saw his country's flag from the window of his school and exclaimed, "Long live Georgia!" At that very moment, in front of live television cameras and in front of United Nations observers, local separatist militias moved in, arresting every single teacher in that school and taking them to undisclosed locations. That was done before the very eyes of the international community by the proxies of Russian peacekeepers.

Let us be under no illusion. The residents of our disputed territories are under a form of gangster occupation whose hope is that the international community will lose interest and reward the results of ethnic cleansing. That cannot be allowed to happen. If we stand by, we will have accepted the fact that indifference and illegality are the new rules of the international game.

This leads me to the topic of Kosovo. As the international community seeks to find a just solution to this decade-long issue, we must take stock of the extraordinarily counterproductive efforts made by the Russian Federation to abuse this unique situation for the pursuit of narrow special interests. Here, too, we must be very frank: any attempt — and many have been made — by Russian officials to create or suggest a nineteenth-century-style solution involving deals and territorial swaps in exchange for agreement on Kosovo would be not only old-fashioned but deeply immoral.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I wish to remind all present that my country's territories, just like yours, are not for sale or exchange. Any hint of a precedent for Abkhazia and South Ossetia would therefore be both inappropriate and reckless.

The foundation of modern peace and security in Europe is based directly on the principle of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. Indeed, it is the cornerstone of the contemporary international order.

If the Russian Federation persists in attempting to make this dangerous linkage and undermine that fundamental order, the impact will be far-reaching and a Pandora's box will be opened, unleashing violent separatism and conflict not only in the Caucasus but across many parts of our globe. We all must be aware of this.

I must assure the Assembly that, because we are a responsible democracy, Georgia will not allow this to happen. To that end, we will, however, work in the spirit, and on the basis, of the values that govern all civilized democracies. In this I do not believe that we are alone. It is our firm belief that, as Europe looks to intensify its relationship with its neighbours in the East, there is a strong interest in avoiding instability and in rejecting the unravelling of sovereign statehood.

It is with these goals and threats in mind that I would like to share with the Assembly my thoughts on how together we can frustrate the aspirations of those who draw strength from the cynical politics of division and fear. Responsible nations have an obligation to act accordingly, and my Government is firm in its belief that we need to transform and replace the current framework for negotiation and peacekeeping in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is therefore our solemn duty and sovereign right to replace ineffective mechanisms with ones that work, substitute partial forces with ones that are fair, and replace fear with hope, and mutual suspicion with newfound trust.

Our efforts are guided by principles that are simple, predictable and clear. We will consult, we will cooperate, and we will commit ourselves to avoiding any policy that is destabilizing. Our goal is the pursuit of peace and a peaceful resolution.

But, again, let me be very clear. If we fail to unite in support of new mechanisms to advance peace, we will give the green light to those whose intentions lie elsewhere, and we risk plunging the region into darkness and conflict despite our best efforts to promote peace.

That is why I am proposing today a fresh road map aimed at resolving the situation whose goal is the peaceful reunification of my country within its internationally recognized borders: a country in which all the diverse ethnic groups of Georgia — and diversity is our strength — can live in peace and harmony, as they did for thousands of years, and enjoy the fruits of democracy in a society that both protects and celebrates their unique heritage; a country that invests in new schools, hospitals and roads, rather than in weapons and armaments.

The essential elements of this package must include the demilitarization of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, backed by the active engagement of the United Nations, the OSCE, the European Union and other international organizations. It must include direct dialogue between the parties on the ground, and here I mean the central Georgian Government and the separatist authorities, so that together we can assume responsibility for resuming the dialogue for peace among peoples and among different communities. These efforts can and will succeed through the establishment of an international police presence in both regions, backed, again, by the robust participation of the international community. Once such a force is in place, we will be ready to endorse its mandate by signing a comprehensive non-use-of-force pledge.

More must also be done to restore trust and improve living standards, and we are prepared to rehabilitate the economies of both regions, which is a necessity. Why should our citizens be reduced to living in such miserable economic conditions? We are ready to contribute significantly to restoring access to the opportunities that the rest of Georgia's citizens are now starting to enjoy. Additional confidence-building measures will also be implemented.

Today, the situation in Georgia is marked by both opportunities and threats. Every day there are new provocations, and every day criminal elements consolidate their hold — actions whose consequences will have international implications. Examples include shooting at helicopters, as well as other incidents that have occurred in recent days.

As we move forward to replace and transform those anachronistic mechanisms, we continue to stand ready to work with our neighbour, the Russian Federation, because Russia must become part of the solution. Consultations aimed at changing those mechanisms have already begun and will intensify in the weeks and months ahead.

It is well established and universally accepted that under international law Georgia has the sovereign right to request the removal of foreign military forces that impede the peaceful resolution of conflict. We make no secret of our intention to exercise that right, because it is based on the most fundamental principles governing a nation and the international community.

It is in the spirit of the United Nations Charter that we seek to bring the benefits of our democratic revolution to all the citizens of Georgia and to every corner of our country.

It is with the deepest respect for this institution and on this occasion that I have chosen to signal not only our desires, but also our concerns. Let no one ever say that Georgia was not clear as to how it sought to protect democracy and the State. Let no one ever say that we sought to do so by other than peaceful means. There is simply no other path for our country — or the international community at large — to follow. We chose to join the standard-bearers of civilized democracy; let no one ever say that we did not act accordingly.

We assume that all nations which share these same values are willing to make the necessary sacrifices for them, so that collectively we can achieve peace in our very important region. Let us, therefore, embrace this historic opportunity and not delay.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ludwig Scotty, MP, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Ludwig Scotty, MP, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ludwig Scotty, MP, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Scotty: The Republic of Nauru congratulates the President of the General Assembly on her election. Nauru commends her pledge to work with Member States to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Charter with transparency and with respect for all views and positions. She has our support and cooperation as she leads this Assembly in the days ahead.

Nauru congratulates the outgoing President, Jan Eliasson, on his appointment as Foreign Minister of Sweden and commends him for implementing the World Summit Outcome Document. His significant contribution has been crucial to the United Nations reform process.

We pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and thank him for his leadership, courage and vision over the past 10 years.

While we aim to reform this great Organization, in line with the realities of the world, we continue to witness major upheavals, conflicts, explosions of violence, natural disasters, terrorism and the giants we have yet to conquer — that is, poverty, disease and human and environmental degradation. We must assure the people of the world that we are committed to finding lasting solutions to global problems, while upholding the principles of the United Nations with full respect for human rights.

But Nauru is concerned that much has been said, but very little has been done. We must, therefore, focus on doing more, as opposed to talking more. And, of equal importance, we must be seen to be doing more, not seen to be talking more.

As a small island developing State, Nauru's concerns relate primarily to development. Yet we have seen little, if any, action to implement the outcome of the Mauritius summit meeting on the sustainable development of small island developing States held last year. There have been no substantial reductions in global emissions since the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. The Monterrey Consensus, whereby the wealthier countries would increase official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product, is still far from being translated into reality.

Despite private and public pledges by the United Nations, we in the Pacific have yet to see the establishment of United Nations offices in the smaller

Pacific member countries of the United Nations, such as Nauru.

Despite this Organization's pledge for universality and the protection of human rights for all, we still deny the 23 million people of Taiwan their right to peace and to development without threat of attack, including through the denial of their right to representation at the United Nations.

Mr. Romulo (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We support the inclusivity of the United Nations, and we reject threats to human dignity, including the denial that the Holocaust ever occurred, together with any call for the elimination of any responsible Member State of this Organization.

That is why Nauru will join other Member countries in protesting and seeking legal redress to the violations of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly that occurred during the meeting of the General Committee last week. Two questions were to be debated: a proactive role for the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in East Asia, and the question of the representation and participation of the 23 million people of Taiwan in the United Nations.

The employment of procedural tricks to deny member countries their right to take part in the debate calls into question the universality of the United Nations, for such tricks only serve to deprive Nauru and like-minded countries of their right to be heard. Even more important, it underlines the need for reform of the United Nations.

There must be a greater voice of the many peoples of the globe, including those of the developing world and those countries that can better represent the interests of the developing world. Nauru, therefore, echoes the words of the Secretary-General when he says:

> "I believe very strongly in the need for Security Council reform, and I have said time and time again that no reform of the UN will be complete without Security Council reform. ... They should pursue Security Council reform because it is part of the reason why we have tensions in the Organization today. Because quite a lot of Members feel that our governance structure is anachronistic and we cannot continue to have a situation where the power base is perceived to be controlled by a limited number of five Member States."

We believe we must move quickly to reform the Council and also to include Japan, Brazil, India and Germany in the permanent membership.

We encourage the United Nations, as part of the reform package, to consider a more binding framework by which the many declarations arising from the Organization and its many meetings can be implemented and measured. Clearly, our moral obligations are not producing the desired results. It is time to build a global partnership within a binding framework in order to facilitate the implementation of resolutions.

We believe that each developing country has primary responsibility for its own development. The year 2005 marked a significant chapter in the development of my country when we presented our first national development strategy at our first donor roundtable meeting. Our national development strategy calls for a partnership. It was drafted by community leaders, civil society, the private sector and the Government of Nauru, based on a national vision. It outlines our priorities and the steps required to reach those goals within a 20-year framework. We gratefully acknowledge our development partners. They have given us tangible assistance that has improved our lives.

However, we still receive offers of development assistance that come with unrealistic conditions attached. In some cases, such assistance is used as a tool of interventionist foreign policy, without giving priority to the human aspect of the development agenda.

For any fragile developing State, delayed assistance creates a perception of failure and incompetence and leads to political and social instability. My delegation is disappointed that the intention of the United Nations to expand its presence in Nauru and other Pacific countries continues unfulfilled. The purpose of an expanded presence would be to achieve the MDGs and other development objectives. We call on the United Nations to recognize our urgent needs and to act with certainty, following a realistic timetable.

My delegation believes that good governance yields good returns for all people. Nauru is emerging

from governance problems caused by shortcomings in the Constitution adopted at our independence. We are grateful for the assistance from the United Nations Democracy Fund that will facilitate the consultative process for a review of our Constitution. That process is critical to the political stability and accountability of future Governments.

In the Summit Outcome, we agreed on measures aimed at protecting our common environment, including a call for a more coherent institutional framework to address the environmental challenges of today. We encourage revisiting the climate change agenda to give more urgency to action as opposed to pledges.

In this regard, we also welcome the Secretary-General's establishment of a High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Nauru aligns itself with the interventions made by the leaders of Pacific nations who have taken the floor before me regarding the concerns and challenges facing the Pacific Island States. As island States, we are vulnerable to the forces of nature because of our remoteness and small populations. As island States, we are affected by factors such as shortage of manpower and technical capacity, weak institutional capacity, limited financial resources and too little foreign direct investment. We lack information and access to environmentally friendly and affordable technologies, including new and sustainable energy sources. Our challenges are intensified by a lack of commitment from the United Nations to support our development aspirations. We hope that the High-level Panel's report will recognize these special challenges and propose realistic solutions.

Sustainable development and basic human rights cannot thrive in a world without peace and security. We must continue to strengthen our collective efforts in resolving conflicts and threats of terrorism through prevention and effective political solutions.

The proliferation of small arms continues to pose a threat to peace and security in our region. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General in his report that, "These weapons may be small, but they cause massive destruction" (A/61/1, para. 102). Nauru is deeply concerned that the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference ended without agreement on further measures to combat this problem. If it is true that whoever is faithful in the small things will also be faithful in the bigger things, then how can we progress towards the elimination of weapons adaptable to mass destruction while failing to agree on the issue of small arms and light weapons?

Finally, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Let us reflect on this passage from the Book of Amos as we renew our partnership of commitment to spare no effort.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ludwig Scotty, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Talabani (*spoke in Arabic*): With confidence, Iraq is making qualitative steps in the transition to nationhood. Under extremely difficult circumstances, Iraq is pursuing this goal and the inherently complicated task of rebuilding the country. Iraq continues courageously to reach for the promise of a democratic, federal and pluralistic State, where generations of long-oppressed Iraqis will regain their dignity and freedom and their right to join the civilized and progressive nations of the world.

As we make our way forward, we are keen to establish a deep-rooted experiment with seeds from Iraq's authentically rich and enlightened ancient heritage. We will pay attention to the lessons of older civilizations in Iraq and the national diversity that embodies the Iraqi vision.

The new Iraq has passed through crucial transitional stages in an incredibly short period of time.

The political process has been strengthened and expanded through the participation of broader and more effective social, political and civil forces. Last year, the first parliamentary elections were held, leading to the formation of a Transitional National Assembly; these were followed by a national referendum on a permanent constitution for the first time in the history of modern Iraq. A second round of elections was held on 15 December 2005, which elected members of a Council of Representatives for a four-year term. The Council convened on 1 February 2006.

These developments, supported by the will of the Iraqi political forces and with the help of our friends, have galvanized the Iraqi majority with its varied political, social and intellectual background. They have created a positive political process, which has produced a Government of National Unity and Salvation under the leadership of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

The region of Iraqi Kurdistan elected a Council of Representatives, followed by the formation of a united Kurdistan Regional Government. This demonstrates that political harmony does indeed exist in the midst of the country's broader political process. It demonstrates significant development in our economy, our culture and our social fabric as a whole where security, stability and economic prosperity prevail. A market economy has been successful and prosperous for Iraq.

What we have achieved so far in the political arena reflects a united national will to succeed in the process of building an Iraq that can confront all of its challenges, ranging from defeating the terrorists — who label others as infidels — and extremist ideologies, to achieving security and stability.

Terrorist operations and activities of those who label others as infidels and organized crime groups in our country are not merely characterized by the killing of innocent people or provoking security chaos; they also aim at destroying the country's infrastructure and hampering our ongoing efforts to rebuild the country and place it firmly on the path of peace, security and democracy.

We must emphasize that the forces of extremism, those that oppose democracy and human values, are intent on making Iraq a stepping stone for reaching other goals and for wreaking even more destruction. These forces comprise regional and Arab elements that export their crises beyond their borders in the hope that Iraq will prove to be fertile ground on which they can deal with those crises by fighting their battles on Iraqi soil and among the people of Iraq. Those groups are mainly composed of remnants of the former dictatorial regime in league with organized criminal elements, themselves a product of the oppression of the old regime and the lapses of security that followed its collapse.

The supply line of money and weapons for those groups extends to neighbouring Arab and regional States. They are further supported by individuals who infiltrate the borders, many of them Al-Qaida operatives and runaway Saddamists. Such groups harbour the illusion that they can suppress the will of our people by continuing to kill, terrorize and spread despair among innocent Iraqis.

To confront such evil intent, national determination will flourish, welcoming all the people of Iraq to participate in the process of building a national consensus. The Prime Minister has launched a national reconciliation plan in the hope of providing the protection and conditions that are necessary for political stability, calm and security. This initiative was formulated and developed through the contributions of a number of political parties holding seats in parliament and represented on Iraq's National Security Council. That is how the first steps towards success were taken. The initiative has received the support of several political opposition groups, including militant groups that were previously part of the armed opposition.

We continue to make efforts within the tripartite Presidential Council — the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Legislature — to expand the range of participation for groups that are genuinely interested in the initiative, regardless of their intellectual, political or organizational orientation. We are encouraging them to join the national effort until all forces are mobilized to bring about political stability and security in Iraq. As we are working tirelessly for a secure and stable Iraq, we are also striving to re-establish an advanced and developed State where everybody can enjoy peace and security. We aspire to that not only for Iraq, but also for all States of the Middle East. This reflects Iraq's concern, despite its preoccupation with its internal situation,

about the suffering of its Arab brothers, especially the Palestinians.

Iraq recognizes the implications of the destruction suffered by the brotherly State of Lebanon and its proud people as a result of the Israeli military onslaught. Therefore, we call for implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy for resolving the Palestinian question, which is at the core of this chronic conflict. We call for implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) concerning the brotherly State of Lebanon, which deserves sympathy and genuine support through funding and technology from all civilized nations, not solely from its Arab brethren.

The ongoing crises and wars in our region impose an enormous responsibility on the international community and the States of the region themselves to reach a just and permanent political settlement that would defuse crises, conflicts and wars. It also makes it incumbent upon us to reach a just and lasting peace that rids the area — and humanity — of the scourge of war, bloody conflict and terrorism.

Iraq, through its Minister of Foreign Affairs, has endorsed the latest decisions of the League of Arab States. Therefore, I call on the international community to accept these fair, logical proposals that are capable of ending strife and achieving security and peace for the peoples of the region.

States with influence at the international level have weightier responsibilities because of the strategic importance of the Middle East with respect to the policies, economies and global objectives of those influential States. They should, therefore, adopt a decisive approach in endorsing solutions that respect the rights and interests of the States and peoples of the region, as provided for in United Nations resolutions and human rights law. The decisive factor in establishing a firm foundation for a regional understanding, leading to just solutions, to a permanent peace based on transparency and the principle of respect for the rights of all parties and to stability in the Middle East, is embodied in collaborative efforts, the will of neighbouring countries and a serious resolve to defeat terrorism and eliminate its hotbeds and causes. A global war on terrorism limited only to military means will not be sufficient to defeat terrorism. We should, therefore, explore and adopt political, economic and other means and tools to strengthen the elements that will lead to victory in that war. In our view, it is beneficial here to consider General Assembly resolution 60/4, which calls on Governments, the United Nations and civil society organizations to develop ways and means in that direction and to work to promote a culture of peace and to condemn violence. It also calls for the formulation of ways and means to expand the circle of dialogue among civilizations in its religious, cultural and civil society dimensions.

What I have referred to serves to strengthen Iraq's vision of making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction — especially nuclear weapons — similar to zones in Africa and Latin America. Such zones safeguard the right of countries to develop technical capacity for the scientific and peaceful use of nuclear energy in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development. In that regard, I would like to emphasize that, in accordance with its permanent constitution and its higher national interests, the new Iraq is committed not to produce such weapons. Iraq will also join the Chemical Weapons Convention and other international instruments pertaining to such weapons.

We would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that there are no weapons of mass destruction of any type in the new Iraq, as has been confirmed in the reports of the most recent United Nations team to visit Iraq. Given that fact, and taking into account the interests of our country, we urge the Security Council to dissolve the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), either by decommissioning it or by transforming it into an international body associated with the United Nations and funded through the Organization's regular budget. UNMOVIC, which in its current form is financed through Iraqi accounts, is a waste of Iraq's resources. Our people are in desperate need of those funds at this point in our country's development.

Major international objectives can only be achieved by joining efforts and harnessing the goodwill of the international community in the service of all humankind. The United Nations has taken it upon itself to play a constructive role in establishing global environment conducive to international peace and security.

Changes on the international stage oblige us to keep abreast of progress in every field, so as to enable the United Nations to carry out its functions. That should be done by better utilizing resources and capabilities to benefit the peoples of the world, as well as by strengthening the role of the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security. There is also a need to respect the principle of the equality of all countries and their right to participate in the formulation and adoption of decisions and policies that affect the international community.

We also need to establish appropriate democratic mechanisms to make possible the participation of countries with the desire and capabilities to support efforts and decisions conducive to the implementation of programmes and the achievement of our common goals. In that connection, we believe that the reform of the international Organization must take account of the interests of all, and must seek to bring about equality and justice by reaching a balance through transparency and consensus.

In the light of those principles, Iraq appreciates the effective role played by the United Nations to resolve international problems. We are grateful to Mr. Ashraf Qazi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for the role he is playing. Iraq hopes that the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations will return to Iraq to resume their part in its development and reconstruction.

In that context, I cannot fail to refer to the International Compact with Iraq. The Compact is the result of an initiative by the Government of Iraq to establish an international contact group that brings together countries and organizations willing to help Iraq and promote its reconstruction efforts. The group will also help establish a sustainable partnership between Iraq and the international community to overcome the challenges resulting from our economic and political transition. It is our hope that the international community will fulfil its obligations by providing the resources required to address key priorities and achieve a common vision in the framework of an economic transformation process and a sustainable development programme through agreed mechanisms.

I express our gratitude to the ministers for foreign affairs who took part in the successful meeting on the Compact that was held in this building a few days ago. The meeting proved that the new Iraq is no longer isolated from the international community. It also illustrated the fact that the new Iraq is on its way to assuming its proper place in a free and developed world.

With regard to reconstruction and the commitments of donor States towards Iraq, we would like to thank those States that are providing assistance to effectively contribute to generating optimism vis-à-vis leaving the past behind, launching the reform process and achieving comprehensive development. However, we also look forward to further support and determination in fulfilling those commitments, because we believe that launching reconstruction projects and stimulating the economy will be decisive in strengthening the security situation and restoring stability to Iraq, the region and the whole world. In that connection, I would like to emphasize that, with our free national will, we are committed to moving forward in reconstructing and implementing our national development programmes and plans.

We believe that it is our right to seek the cancellation of the numerous and exorbitant reparations payments and debts of the new democratic Iraq, which must not be made to pay for the sins of a dictatorship that committed many crimes against its people and betrayed the nation. Iraq believes that achieving sustainable development goes hand in hand with respecting human rights, providing security, achieving justice, ensuring the fair distribution of wealth and developing the agricultural, economic and service sectors.

In order to rise to the challenge posed by those tasks, we must respect women and their rights and ensure that they play their role in the development process and in the political arena. That goal has now become a firm principle in our pursuits, as stipulated in the Iraqi constitution, which confirmed the right of women to contribute to our country by holding no less than 25 per cent of the seats in the Council of Representatives. Iraqi women also now head four ministries in the Iraq Government of National Unity.

In conclusion, I would like to address anyone and everyone who harbours doubts that we are as committed and determined as we were three years ago

to achieving national reconciliation. I assure them that the reconciliation process is a promising one. It is receiving all possible support and is moving forward with the backing of all political blocs. Our efforts will be focused on making reconciliation a permanent living reality that reflects the aspirations and hopes of the people of Iraq. That is especially so given that important steps have been taken that have resulted in national consensus and support from all the influential political forces in the country. We have also succeeded in charting a road map to resolve all remaining key issues, including those pertaining to the constitution, federal regions, militias, oil, de-Baathification and the new national flag, emblem and anthem.

As we underscore our determination, we also express the hope that Arab and regional parties, including neighbouring countries in particular, will share our determination and make every effort to halt any activities, support for or encouragement of the forces of terrorism — including those who label others as infidels and the remnants of dictatorial fascist gangs in the country. We also call upon neighbouring States to take the necessary measures to seal their borders against infiltrators.

We reaffirm our keen desire for security and safety for all our neighbours. We also express our adherence to the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, so as to prevent our territory from being used as a staging ground to carry out acts against our neighbours. However, our people's patience is wearing thin, in particular when we see the blood of our innocent sons and daughters being spilled and defiled, our infrastructure destroyed, our mosques and holy shrines ruined and the rebuilding of our armed forces and security services impeded in an attempt to delay the achievement of full sovereignty. It is difficult for our political leadership to keep quiet forever.

The ferocity of the terrorist attacks that target our people and country will not dissuade us from working persistently and with unwavering determination to defeat the terrorists. In so doing, we shall rely on our people's vigilance, our political forces and our military and security capabilities, which are visibly being developed and strengthened in a number of Iraq's governorates as the tide of terrorism recedes.

The building of Iraq's national armed forces and its strengthening to the desired levels continues apace, in an effort to ensure that our capabilities reach the necessary level, degree of competency and readiness to gradually bring about the departure of Coalition forces from our country. Those forces are present in Iraq in accordance with an international resolution. In the current circumstances, their presence is essential as we carry out the task of building up our armed forces that will be capable of putting an end to terrorism and of maintaining stability and security. Once that has been achieved, it will then be possible to talk about a timetable for the withdrawal of multinational forces from Iraq.

The President returned to the Chair.

At this point, I would like once again to express our gratitude to the forces that participated in liberating our country from the worst dictatorship in history. In particular, we would like to thank President George W. Bush for his leadership in the campaign to liberate Iraq from tyranny and opening up the way for a new, democratic, pluralistic and federal Iraq that is at peace with itself and the world. That historic mission has well served the people of Iraq and peace and security in the region.

In conclusion, allow me, on behalf of the people and Government of Iraq to congratulate you, Madam President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We wish you every success in achieving the goals set for this session, and we reaffirm our determination to cooperate with you fully in that noble undertaking.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his dedicated efforts to re-energize the United Nations to work towards international peace and security and to promote development and respect for human rights throughout the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius): I would like to express my sincere congratulations, and those of my delegation, to you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

My delegation wishes to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the leadership and courage he has displayed during his tenure at the helm of the Secretariat. Secretary-General Annan assumed office at a time when the United Nations was facing severe criticism and its very relevance was being questioned. His dedication and professionalism have contributed significantly towards enhancing the efficiency and credibility of our Organization and its Secretariat. His initiatives to promote the development agenda of the United Nations have been of crucial importance, in particular to Africa. As the Secretary-General prepares to relinquish his office in the next few weeks, we thank him warmly and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

Since our last annual meeting, several ongoing conflicts have remained unresolved and new ones have emerged. The situation in the Middle East continues to be a major preoccupation for the international community. While violence is still raging in Iraq and peace still eludes the Palestinian people, the recent conflict involving Israel and Hizbullah has not only cost so many innocent lives but has also resulted in the wanton destruction of vital infrastructure within Lebanon. Now that the guns have finally fallen silent, we urge all concerned in this unnecessary month-long conflict to abide fully by the provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and to settle their outstanding issues through United Nations mediation.

There seems to be a unanimous view in the world today that the Middle East remains the epicentre of global insecurity and instability. Global peace and prosperity will remain an elusive dream unless and until the international community stretches all its diplomatic sinews to create conditions for lasting peace in the region. Mauritius strongly believes that a fair and final peace settlement in the Israel-Palestine conflict rests in the early implementation of the existing road map that has been endorsed by the international community.

We reiterate our support for an independent and sovereign Palestinian State existing side by side with the State of Israel.

The situation in Darfur remains a matter of serious concern not only to us in Africa but to the international community as a whole. We are confident that Security Council resolution 1706 (2006) has the capacity to lend strong support to the efforts already deployed by the African Union to put an end to that crisis.

Terrorism continues to be a major disruption for peace and development. The recent adoption of resolution 60/288 — the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy — sends a clear message that terrorism is unacceptable no matter who commits it, no matter where it takes place and no matter what the reason. Mauritius unreservedly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. But let us not delude ourselves into thinking that we can address the scourge of terrorism without addressing its root causes.

Fifteen years ago, the Assembly initiated discussions on the reform of the Security Council. Numerous proposals have been made since then. Each proposal, whatever its merits, has met determined resistance from some members defending their own narrowly defined interests. It is unacceptable that the African and Latin America and the Caribbean regions are not represented in the permanent membership of the Security Council. It is also morally and politically unacceptable that the world's most populous democracy is still denied a seat as a permanent member of the Council. It is imperative that a reformed Security

Council should include India among its permanent members.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council constitutes a significant step in the implementation of our common reform agenda. That new organ of the General Assembly should perform efficiently so as to establish itself as a credible universal institution for the promotion and protection of human rights. My delegation would like to thank the General Assembly for electing Mauritius as one of the 47 members of the Council at the elections held earlier this year. We will do our utmost for the universal promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with the mandate conferred upon the Council by the Assembly.

The multilateral approach to disarmament has been on the back burner for some time. It is unfortunate that little progress has been achieved in respect of strengthening the foundations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Mauritius supports the aim of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons on the basis of a comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament regime.

My delegation wishes to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that, 38 years after its independence, Mauritius has still not been able to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. The Archipelago was excised from the territory of Mauritius by the former colonial Power to be subsequently used for military purposes behind our back, in total disregard of Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2066 (XX). That exercise also involved the shameful displacement of the inhabitants of the Chagos from their homeland, thereby denying them their fundamental human rights. International law must prevail, as must respect for the sovereignty of all countries. We therefore call once again on the United Kingdom to pursue constructive dialogue in earnest with my Government, with a view to enabling Mauritius to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

We view positively the visit jointly organized by the Governments of Mauritius and of the United Kingdom in April this year to enable the former inhabitants of the Chagos to visit the Archipelago for the first time since their displacement to pay respects at their relatives' graves on the Archipelago.

We hope to continue meaningful dialogue with France on the question of sovereignty over Tromelin, given our excellent bilateral relations. We view the agreement reached in Paris at the expert level in January 2006 to set up a French-Mauritian joint commission for the co-management of the Tromelin zone as a positive first step.

My delegation is pleased that you, Madam President, have chosen development as the focus of your presidency. We welcome your proposal to dedicate this session of the General Assembly to the issue of implementing a global partnership for development. The biggest dilemma is how to secure the necessary financial flows towards developing countries. We call on the international community to honour commitments made to developing countries concerning official development assistance. Equally, we hope for conditions that will allow better access to the markets of the more affluent countries to generate resources for development.

Our meeting today coincides with the end of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. The progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including halving the proportion of people suffering extreme poverty by 2015, has been below expectations, as reflected in human development indices. Poverty continues to prevail from generation to generation in many parts of the world, in particular in the sub-Saharan region. The political, social and economic marginalization or exclusion of poor people very often undermines the stability and development potential of many countries.

Does that imply that conventional solutions have failed because they do not really address the root causes of persistent poverty? Or is it because instead of taking a bottom-up approach we have adopted a top-down approach, relying too much on the trickle-down effect? The fight against poverty is becoming more and more complex. Only a holistic and comprehensive approach will allow us to push back the frontier of the misery, conflict and hardship that afflict such a sizeable proportion of humankind.

In our own subregion, we have initiated measures to address the issue of poverty in earnest. At the recent Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit, held in Lesotho in August, we debated the issue of poverty alleviation. An extraordinary SADC summit on regional integration, scheduled for next month, will discuss a road map on poverty and development.

There is an almost symbiotic relationship between poverty and ill health, with disease often further impoverishing the poor and impacting negatively on the stock of scarce human capital in poor countries. Apart from malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis — and now avian flu — which are getting a lot of attention, other vector-borne diseases have manifested themselves, and are growing in an exponential manner.

The alarming rate with which the HIV/AIDS pandemic is ravaging our populations has far-reaching implications for our socio-economic development. It impedes our global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We appreciate the political commitment of the international community to combat this scourge so as to bring solace to those already afflicted and to prevent the further spread of the disease. Mauritius promptly and spontaneously joined the innovative financing mechanism initiated by France and Brazil to introduce a solidarity levy on air tickets to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The launching this week of UNITAID — the International Drug Purchase Facility — has aroused new hopes.

Climate change is yet another serious threat. For too long, some of us have conveniently decided to ignore it. In fact, well-known institutions and eminent scientists have reached the conclusion that climate change may be one of the biggest threats to humankind. Of particular concern is the impact of global warming on certain vectors of disease, leading to their proliferation. It is estimated that in Africa, for example, we may witness many more millions of cases of malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases as a result of climate change.

Mauritius is fully committed to the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round. We look forward to a multilateral trading system that will be fair and equitable and that provides for the specific situations and needs of small and vulnerable economies. The recommendations of the World Trade Organization Aid for Trade Task Force, submitted in July 2006, should be implemented urgently to enable countries, particularly those with small and vulnerable economies, to access resources to undertake adjustment and restructuring programmes and to enhance their trade infrastructure and supply capacities.

Globalization does not seem to be living up to its promises. We should not allow it to be a process that unleashes the potential of the few while suppressing the aspirations of the many. It will have to be tamed into a development process that will provide an opportunity to every single citizen of the world to achieve his or her full potential.

Mauritius, like so many small island economies with meagre resource bases, has had to adjust to the realities and challenges of increasing liberalization and global economic competition — especially the erosion of trade preferences, which have so far helped in addressing our inherent disadvantages. My Government has embarked upon a programme of bold and wide-ranging economic reforms to adapt to the new realities of the international economy.

At the end of the day, what is the ultimate role that each of us here has as heads of State and heads of Government? We have been entrusted with the destiny of our people and of our countries. We are but temporary custodians of the welfare of our people and that of humankind. If we really want to build better societies and a better world for future generations, we must indeed make a significant dent on the issue of poverty. We must channel significant resources and energy towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals. And we must ensure that we create stable and sustainable societies.

To achieve that, we can no longer afford to simply keep talking about noble intentions. We must walk the walk, not just talk the talk. Each one of us here has the responsibility to implement national policies that provide opportunities for those who have always been deprived of their human dignity as a result of living perpetually on the margins of the socio-economic mainstream.

My Government is guided by the notion of citizenship with dignity as a moral compass for action. We believe that socio-economic justice is a fundamental pillar of human dignity. We are therefore determined to provide concrete opportunities to the economically disenfranchised, in order to lift them out of the vortex of unjust economic inequalities. I have always upheld the ideals of social justice. I have therefore ensured that my Government dedicates no less than 12 per cent of our last national budget to an ambitious empowerment programme. That programme is funded by State and non-State actors, thereby heralding a new partnership for development in my country. It will provide tangible avenues for the poor

and unskilled to equip themselves with the tools necessary for them to join the economic mainstream. It also seeks to create a new and flourishing class of entrepreneurs. That is one of the effective and concrete ways by which we can truly ensure that we widen the circle of opportunities.

(*spoke in French*)

Resolving the problems to which I have referred to a large extent requires openness, responsiveness, dialogue and solidarity. We in Mauritius have the good fortune of being situated in a major crossroads as far as philosophies and religions are concerned. The history of the settlement of our islands has made that the case. We are the children of several traditions. Our identity has been shaped by various influences, from the East, West, North and South. Numerous ethnic groups, cultures, religions and languages have been evolving in our territory, and we are endeavouring to ensure that they enrich each other. We seek the commingling of cultures, which provides us Mauritians with a complex and dynamic identity. We believe that that is the best way to build a nation and to assert ourselves. As one can imagine, that situation requires ongoing vigilance on the part of political, religious and media leaders as well as rigorous and transparent application of the principles of justice.

We would like to believe that the experience of Mauritius can be applied at the international level. We also hope that dialogue between peoples and communities and communication between heads of State and Government will bring about the end of the disagreements that are today undermining our world, which is the only one we have.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): I have the honour to convey to the General Assembly the warm greetings of His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, as well as his best wishes for the success of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your unanimous election as the President of the Assembly. Your election is a reflection of the General Assembly's confidence in your personal abilities and the high esteem that the Kingdom of Bahrain enjoys. My country has fond memories of 21 September 1971, when our two Kingdoms became proud members of the United Nations. My delegation also wishes to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the exemplary manner in which he directed the work of the sixtieth session. Under his stewardship, a number of important decisions of the 2005 World Summit were implemented. We are confident that, under your dynamic leadership, Madam President, the sixty-first will be able to successfully complete all its tasks. Bhutan is honoured to serve as one of the Vice-Presidents. We assure you of our full cooperation and support.

We fully support the theme for the general debate, "Implementing a global partnership for development". In this era of globalization and technological advances that have brought unprecedented prosperity to a minority of the world's population, the international community must unite forces to extricate the vast majority of the world's inhabitants from the vicious circle of poverty and destitution. The global partnership must engender greater political will to address the problems of trade, market access, technology transfer and a host of other issues that impede growth and development in developing countries. It is also imperative that the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, especially those relating to development, are fully implemented by all.

The Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least

Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which was undertaken earlier this week, has revealed much less progress than desired. It is my delegation's hope that, as provided in the declaration that was adopted by the review meeting, all stakeholders will genuinely commit themselves to the special needs of the least developed countries and work towards the full implementation of the Programme of Action, which constitutes a fundamental framework for strong global partnership to accelerate sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication in the least developed countries (LDCs).

Owing to the limited prospects for raising domestic resources, attracting foreign investment and securing funds on commercial terms, official development assistance (ODA) is a critical resource for LDCs in achieving the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action. In fact, for many LDCs, such as mine, ODA constitutes the primary resource for development. My delegation therefore appeals to all developed countries to abide by their aid commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to ODA, with 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of that earmarked for least developed countries.

A summit meeting of landlocked developing countries was held on 14 September in Havana, Cuba. That was the first-ever summit meeting of landlocked developing countries and it highlighted the serious constraints faced by landlocked developing countries. It is our hope that the international community will duly consider the problems of landlocked developing countries and support the road map for global partnership set out by the Almaty Programme of Action.

The task of reforming the United Nations remains incomplete, in view of the slow progress in areas such as the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and the reform of the Security Council. It is not enough to say that the reform of those bodies is required, while we allow ourselves to be constrained by other considerations. We need to strengthen the Economic and Social Council to enable it to deal effectively with the social, economic and development issues that are of primary concern for the vast majority of Member States.

The Security Council needs to be reformed to reflect today's realities and challenges. My delegation strongly believes that the status quo is no longer an option. The Security Council has to be urgently reformed in all its aspects, including its composition and working methods. It is regrettable that the proposal submitted by the Group of Four at the sixtieth session was not acted upon. It is my delegation's hope that the sixty-first session will be able to bring about real reform of the Security Council.

We welcome the adoption by the sixtieth session of the resolution on the revitalization of the General Assembly. We must continue with our efforts to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of this body, which is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Terrorism continues to threaten peace, security and development in many parts of the world.

The recent train bombings in Mumbai, India, and the plot to blow up transatlantic aircraft uncovered in London last August remind us of the need to take strong measures against international terrorism. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the General Assembly's adoption at its sixtieth session of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). The next important steps are to implement the Strategy and to renew efforts to conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Recent developments in the Middle East once again highlight the urgency of finding a solution to the problem there. My delegation calls upon all concerned parties and others in a position to help to strive for a just and comprehensive solution.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my country's deep appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan for his dedicated service to the United Nations as its Secretary-General. We are confident that the next Secretary-General, who should be from Asia, will lead the United Nations to greater heights in the service of humankind.

Allow me to take a few moments to apprise the international community of the progress that Bhutan is making. As a small, least developed country with a population of just over half a million people, the hurdles we face are enormous. Yet, under the far-sighted leadership of His Majesty the King, the country has been making significant progress in all fields.

On the political front, most notable is the culmination of the reforms that will usher in parliamentary democracy in 2008. Those changes are taking place in an environment of peace, progress and stability. We are hopeful that the transition will be smooth and the final outcome enduring.

Bhutan's development is guided by the conviction that human well-being and contentment must be promoted through the pursuit of material progress, on the one hand, and the fulfilment of spiritual and emotional needs, on the other. That development philosophy, as I have stated before in the Assembly, is defined as the pursuit of gross national happiness, rather than just gross national product. We will be happy to share our experience on that development philosophy, as we did at the international conference on the theme "Rethinking development: local pathways to global well-being", which was held in Nova Scotia, Canada, in June 2005. We believe that the happy planet index that was recently published in the United Kingdom by the New Economics Foundation bears close a relation to the development paradigm pursued by Bhutan.

I wish the General Assembly every success.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Chin (Palau): Let me begin by offering my congratulations to you, Madam President. We would also like to thank former Assembly President Jan Eliasson for his able leadership over the past year. Our deep appreciation also goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has served the Organization with skill and devotion.

Palau joins others in welcoming Montenegro, the newest State Member of the United Nations. We look forward to its participation in our debates.

Participation in the United Nations has special meaning for Palau. We were the last country to emerge from the United Nations Trusteeship System. During trusteeship, it was the United Nations that showed us that every country, regardless of size, had a role to play. The United Nations provided our nation with a platform from which we could achieve independence and establish our sovereignty. For that we are forever grateful.

Palau is often seen as a paradise of swaying palm trees and ocean breezes. But that simplistic view fails to recognize the challenges we face as a small island developing State. In this shrinking world, the actions of distant countries are having a profound effect on us. We come to the Assembly now, asking for its help once again as we face those difficult issues.

One of the issues that we hope the General Assembly will act on this year is deep-sea bottom trawling. As the Secretary-General has reported, bottom trawling is responsible for 95 per cent of the worldwide damage to seamount ecosystems. It is an irresponsible practice, and Palau has passed a law banning all bottom trawling within our waters. In doing so, Palau followed the lead set by Japan, the United States, Norway, Australia and many other responsible countries.

It is now time to ensure that similar measures are taken for international waters. That is why Palau has joined with our Pacific colleagues in Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia to propose an interim prohibition on unregulated bottom trawling. Our proposal represents the strong determination of our region to protect the oceans upon which we all ultimately rely.

Another issue of great importance is that of global warming. Coral bleaching, a rise in sea level and altered fish migration all threaten the future of Palau and other small island nations. Reversing that trend is one of our top priorities. We continue to urge the international community to act aggressively to reduce emissions that lead to global warming.

Palau is a democratic society. Our children know the importance of culture and community. We guarantee human rights in our nation. We also know that flying our flag here at the United Nations carries with it certain obligations, and we have met them all. Palau has deployed peacekeepers to regional and international missions. When natural disasters strike, Palau responds willingly and voluntarily. When the international community called upon countries to preserve biodiversity, Palau came forward with the Micronesian Challenge. That initiative will protect 462 coral species, which represent 58 per cent of all known corals.

Our future as a nation and the future of our children depend upon the viability of our environment, especially of the oceans. Palau relies on the health of its amazing reefs and waters to provide food for our people and to support our tourism industry. Without those we will not be able to develop a sustainable economy that will allow our children to live and work in their homeland. To provide for them, we look to the United Nations for leadership and support. To that end, Palau remains open to ideas for harmonizing the environmental agencies at the United Nations. We applaud efforts to streamline the process of accessing those agencies; that would make them more responsive to small nations. In the same vein, Palau would like to state that difficulties in accessing assistance in claiming our extended continental shelf have made it clear that we will have a hard time meeting the 2009 deadline for submissions.

Last year, in this historic Hall, we noted our concern that the United Nations, its offices and organizations did not have a permanent representative in Palau. In June, it was announced that a coalition comprised of the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund would open a total of eight new offices in Pacific island countries, including Palau. We welcome that historic accomplishment. It is a giant step towards harmonization within the United Nations. For Palau, it will give us one of the tools we need most for sustainable development, namely, local capacity-building.

Let us not forget the continuing threat of terrorism. We recognize that terrorism anywhere is a threat to people everywhere. We have looked for assistance to improve our anti-terrorism capacity. Palau has met, and worked with, the Counter-terrorism Executive Directorate to advance our requests for assistance, particularly in the area of combating money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. Unfortunately, the efforts of the Directorate have been insufficient. Our hope is that, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the United Nations will be able to help smaller countries in addressing that threat.

We would also like to take a moment to thank a few of the many partners that have assisted Palau this past year. The efforts of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme deserve special recognition. The GEF programme in the North Pacific has resulted in an effective mechanism to protect our environment through grass-roots projects.

Palau has also partnered with a number of countries that have supported our development. First, the United States has provided in-country diplomatic representation and years of support. We acknowledge the generosity of the United States in responding to natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific region. We thank them for that. Japan has also provided invaluable assistance to Palau. The addition of Japan as a member of the Security Council would help inform other Council members that are less familiar with our regional needs and concerns. We have supported, and continue to support, the G-4 draft resolution, and hope that the Assembly will address the draft resolution this year.

Taiwan has been another steady supporter of Palau's development. We continue to assert that the world would benefit from Taiwan's membership in the United Nations and other international institutions. This year, Palau co-sponsored a draft resolution calling for a proactive role for the United Nations in addressing the tensions in East Asia. We were disappointed that the actions of the General Committee prevented a debate on that draft resolution.

Palau would also like to recognize Australia's steadfast commitment to stability in our region, as well as its dedication to capacity-building. Through such initiatives as its patrol boat programme, Australia enables Palau to address illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, which threatens our sovereignty and the marine habitats that surround our island nation.

We call on all parties in the Sudan to work together to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. As Mr. Jan Eliasson stated on 11 September,

> "we have ... seen the horrors of Cambodia, Rwanda and Srebrenica without taking action. The same tragedy must not befall the people in Darfur or elsewhere. The responsibility to protect must move from declaration to action." (*A/60/PV.100, p. 6*)

Lastly, Palau would like to take this opportunity to express our hope that the Middle East peace process can be successfully restarted. We are hopeful that the expanded United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will bring peace and security to both Israel and Lebanon. We stress the need for full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including its preamble. We join the call for the unconditional release of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. It is critical that the reconstructed UNIFIL force be effective and capable of enforcing the arms embargo as called for.

On behalf of Palau, a small island nation in the wide Pacific Ocean, let me thank the entire Assembly in my country's native language. Kom Kmal Mesulang. God bless you all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the rostrum.*

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Margaret Beckett, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Beckett (United Kingdom): First, I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Secretary-General. A former British Minister once said of the NATO Secretary General that he should be more of a secretary and less of a general. Kofi Annan has been more of everything: more of a diplomat, more of a reformer and more of a moral voice of leadership in the world.

In a world shattered by conflict, the founders of the United Nations saw that only by coming together, united in support of larger freedom, could we build our shared future. Today, when the world's nations are even more interdependent than they were in 1945, what does it mean to stand, as they intended, united? At one level it means taking action when things go wrong, where there is an actual breakdown of security or a descent into violence or chaos. Today in particular, the United Nations faces the challenges posed by multiple upheavals and crises across the world.

In the Middle East the United Nations is playing a vital role in establishing stability in southern Lebanon. Troops from the European Union are deploying alongside those from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. All Member States must meet their obligations under Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006), 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), if we are to enable Lebanon to be the proud, democratic and diverse nation that its people want it to be.

But we are all aware that this most recent conflict in Lebanon had its roots in the continuing failure to achieve a just solution to the Palestinian question. That is why the United Kingdom has consistently argued that there can be no higher priority than reinvigorating the Middle East peace process.

In Iraq, Prime Minister Al-Maliki's national reconciliation plan can help leaders from all communities come together. At this crucial juncture, we must all intensify our support. The International Compact provides the right vehicle. It allows the Iraqi Government to set its own vision and shows us how we can help turn that vision into a reality.

In Afghanistan, real progress has been made, with the United Nations taking a leading role in coordinating the international effort. But real challenges still lie ahead. NATO's task of securing the south of the country is far from easy. Soldiers from many NATO countries, not least my own, have given their lives to provide a better future for the people of Afghanistan. The Afghan Government and people, too, want security, development and good governance. The United Kingdom and the international community are determined to help them to achieve them.

We must show a similar shared determination in urging the Government of Iran to address international concerns over its nuclear ambitions and its support for terrorism. The proposals put forward by Britain, France and Germany with China, Russia and the United States offer a path for the Iranian Government to develop a more constructive relationship with the rest of the world and give Iran's talented population the opportunities and prosperity that is their right, including, if they wish, a modern nuclear power industry. We want to be able to resume negotiations.

Iran knows what is required, and that the alternative is increasing isolation.

Darfur remains in crisis. I pay tribute to the efforts of the African Union and its peacekeepers. Wednesday's decision to extend their mandate averted a security vacuum. We must now strengthen the force of the African Union Mission in the Sudan. But it can only be a temporary reprieve. We also need action immediately on the political and humanitarian front. Those who have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement must do so. Those who have must abide by its provisions.

To underpin that Agreement, we urgently need a greatly strengthened international presence on the ground, with the active engagement and support of Asian and Muslim, as well as African, countries. That is why the Security Council authorized the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers to Darfur. I urge President Bashir to extend the Sudan's relations with the United Nations in a common purpose to bring lasting peace and genuine stability to the whole of the Sudan. It is, above all, his responsibility.

The security challenges the world faces are real. As an international community we must deal with them. But standing united also requires us to take up a second, deeper level of global responsibility, namely, tackling the underlying problems that promote conflict and underdevelopment. We must strive to promote sound global values and to build multilateral systems within which nations and individuals can cooperate, co-exist and each achieve their potential.

Many representatives to the Assembly have already spoken of the need to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Progress on those Goals is a moral imperative rooted in a concern for, and an understanding of, our common humanity. But it is also a political imperative, because there will be no stability and security in our global community while so many millions of men, women and children in that community face only a life of hunger, poverty, inequality and disease.

The same is true for those whose lives are shattered by conflict or blighted by injustice. The Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council are new structures that give us new opportunities and new impetus. At the same time, we must see a step change in efforts towards an international arms trade treaty that will end the irresponsible transfer of arms that fuel conflict and facilitate the abuse of human rights. That is why the United Kingdom, with six other countries, will introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee to establish a process to work towards a legally binding treaty on the trade in all conventional arms.

Collectively, we have a responsibility to protect human life and a duty to defend the international institutions that help us as a community to achieve that goal. The answers lie not in division or in personal attacks, but in the earnest and consistent pursuit of justice and peace.

Our collective responsibility to each other is nowhere more evident than in the huge challenge posed by climate change. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made climate change one of our two G8 priorities last year, alongside poverty reduction in Africa. When the Prime Minister appointed me as his Foreign Secretary, in May, he specifically charged me with putting climate security at the heart of our foreign policy. We will not solve that problem if we do not each assume our share of the responsibility for tackling it. Nobody can protect themselves from climate change unless we protect each other by building a global basis for climate security. That goes to the heart of the United Nations mission, and the United Nations must be at the heart of the solution.

To put it starkly, if we all try to freeride, we will all end up in free fall, with accelerating climate change the result of our collective failure to respond in time to that shared threat that faces us all. Look just at the danger posed by rising sea levels. Potentially, that could cause massive damage to some of the key urban centres of our global civilization. London, Shanghai, Dhaka, Singapore, Amsterdam, Cairo and, yes, Manhattan are all at risk. That is why we must all — as foreign ministers, heads of Government and heads of State — be ready to do more, and do it more quickly. Our climate presents us with an ever-growing threat to international security. Dealing with climate change, by both adapting to what is now inevitable and acting to avert still greater damage, is no longer a choice, it is an imperative.

We need common commitment and genuine action. We must all be ready to find a way to get the agenda moving beyond Kyoto. The Gleneagles dialogue meeting in Mexico at the beginning of

October will be one such opportunity, a chance for developed and developing countries to work together on that shared problem.

If we do not act now, an unstable climate will undermine our progress in all those other areas that matter to us, not least the Millennium Development Goals themselves. Take one of the most basic needs of all, water. Already perhaps two fifths of the world's population finds it hard to get the water they need. At the same time, many in the world rely on affordable energy to help lift themselves out of poverty — and, indeed, perhaps to give them access to that water. But there is a dilemma: if we provide affordable energy by burning fossil fuels, we accelerate climate change. That means further disrupting water supplies. For some people who now have plenty of water it will mean new shortages. For those who already have little, it will mean less. In turn, everywhere less water means less food.

Let me give a specific example of that dilemma. The whole world, as well as the Chinese people, is benefiting from the great success of the Chinese economy. No one in China or elsewhere wants that growth to stop. But it is based, in China as elsewhere, on a rapidly increasing use of the fossil fuels that are creating climate change. Yet China is a country already vulnerable to climate change. The Chinese Government knows that as the Himalayan glaciers melt and agricultural land shrinks, crop yields will fall, fresh water will become more scarce and the economy itself will suffer, and with it the world's economy.

All the nations of the Arctic Circle are being, and will be, affected by melting permafrost, with disruptions to infrastructure and to investment. The Vice-President of Palau has just given us a vivid description of what the environment means for his nation. We all share, to a greater or lesser extent, that same dilemma. If we do not act on climate change, we risk undermining the very basis of the prosperity and security we are seeking to achieve. That is why we must recognize that talk of having either a successful economy or a stable climate is a false choice. We must work together to find paths for economic growth that will protect our climate. The truth is that we already have much of the technology we need to move to a low-carbon economy. But we must now deploy it very much more rapidly. What we do in the next 10 years will count the most.

The former chief economist of the World Bank, Sir Nicholas Stern, will shortly publish one of the most significant and wide-reaching analyses so far of the economic impacts of climate change itself. One of the key emerging findings of his work is that while it will not cost the Earth to solve climate change, it will cost the Earth, literally as well as financially, if we do not.

Moreover, if we learn to tackle climate change together, we have an opportunity to build trust between nations and to strengthen the multilateral system. But if we get it wrong, that trust will be further eroded. It is the developed, rich world that bears a large responsibility for the present level of greenhouse gas emissions, but it is the poorest in our global community — those least able to bear it — who will bear the brunt of climate insecurity. We all need to do more. But the rich world should of course continue to lead the effort, applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, which must continue to be our guide. In the joint endeavour which the United Nations represents there can be no more stark or more urgent warning than that.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am confident that, under your guidance, this session will achieve full success. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the last session, and to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of Montenegro on becoming a Member of the United Nations.

The world is experiencing profound and complex changes. Peace, development and cooperation have become trends of our times and represent the common aspirations of all countries and peoples in the world. However, the world is not tranquil and the issue of development remains prominent. There is still a long way to go in the pursuit of durable peace and common development. Recently, the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, the Iranian nuclear issue and the Lebanese-Israeli conflict have flared up, adversely affecting regional and global stability and testing the wisdom, unity and patience of the international community.

To maintain peace is the shared mission of the entire international community. Consultations based on equality and peaceful negotiations are the only effective means to resolve disputes. China, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the international community, will continue to make every effort to achieve a peaceful resolution of hotspot issues.

As regards the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, China is committed to maintaining peace and stability on the Peninsula, making it free of nuclear weapons and promoting the six-party talks. During the Security Council's deliberations in July regarding the missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the related resolution, China made strenuous efforts to engage the parties concerned, in an effort to maintain peace on the Peninsula and in North-East Asia and preserve the unity and authority of the Security Council and safeguard the progress already made in the six-party talks.

Long-standing antagonism and mistrust between the parties concerned is the main cause of the current difficulty. All parties should be patient and pragmatic and act with vision to reduce differences and remove obstacles through dialogue. The six-party talks remain an effective mechanism to enhance understanding and trust and resolve the Korean nuclear issue. We hope that the parties involved will be cool-headed and more flexible, expand common ground, meet each other halfway and work together for the early resumption of the six-party talks and progressive implementation of the joint statement. That is the only viable solution to the Korean nuclear issue.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear issue, China calls for upholding the integrity of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and is opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It has worked for a peaceful resolution of the issue in order to promote peace and stability in the Middle East. At the same time, the legitimate right of countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be fully respected, provided they fulfil their relevant international obligations.

Diplomatic negotiation represents the best chance to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue and serve the interests of all parties. China hopes that the parties involved will exercise patience and restraint, continue to take a flexible approach and remain committed to the right course of pursuing a peaceful resolution. China will continue to play a constructive role in working for an appropriate settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue.

As regards the Lebanese-Israeli conflict, China opposes any move that will undermine peace and stability in the region, and calls for a comprehensive cessation of hostilities. China welcomes Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and hopes that it will be strictly observed. China hopes that the parties concerned will reach an early agreement on a framework of political settlement that is both just and durable.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue. The peace process should be re-started in keeping with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the principle of land for peace, in the interest of reaching an early and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East issue, including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, so that the countries involved can live in harmony and the region can enjoy durable peace.

The United Nations has played an instrumental role in resolving regional flashpoints this year. But the Organization also faces major challenges. In the new international environment, to enhance its role through reform is in the common interest of humankind. The United Nations needs to take resolute steps in carrying out reform. The United Nations should develop in a way that promotes the purposes and principles of its Charter, upholds the unity and cooperation of the Organization and serves the collective interests of its Members. The reform of the United Nations should be comprehensive in coverage, and progress should be made in security, development, human rights and other fields. More should be done to promote development and facilitate the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The reform of the Organization should, as far as possible, satisfy the needs of its Member States, particularly those from the developing world. The reform should be a democratic process and full consultations should be conducted to reach widespread consensus. Major controversial issues should be handled with caution and dealt with through in-depth consultations.

China welcomes the progress made in reforming the United Nations, in particular the progress in implementing the World Summit Outcome. We will

pledge $3 million to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. We will continue to work with other countries to make progress in the reform of the United Nations, strengthen the unity and authority of the Organization and increase its efficiency and capacity to respond to challenges.

As the chief administrator of the United Nations, the Secretary-General has an important role to play. In the election of the next Secretary-General, China will firmly support an Asian candidate. We are convinced that Asia can produce a competent and well-respected Secretary-General acceptable to all Member States.

The scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations involves the interests of all Member States and constitutes the financial foundation of the Organization. All Member States have an obligation to pay their assessments on time and in full. The ability to pay is the basic principle governing the scale of assessments. It should be adhered to, as it has proved effective and represents the general consensus of Member States. Over the years, China has honoured its financial obligations in good faith and has made appropriate contributions to the budget of the United Nations. As China's economy grows, we are prepared to increase our contributions to the Organization's budget in accordance with the principle of ability to pay. We are ready to take part in relevant discussions in a constructive way, and hope that a fair and equitable formula will be reached on the basis of extensive consultations.

Without overall development, global peace and progress cannot be sustained. In addition to developing the concept of partnership and improving its modalities, all countries should honour our commitment to the global partnership for development set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and last year's World Summit Outcome.

Countries should shoulder the primary responsibility for their own development and implement comprehensive development strategies in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The international community — and developed countries in particular — should increase development assistance, promote international trade, technology transfers and investment, offer more extensive debt relief, provide more support to developing countries and respect their ownership of national development strategies.

The United Nations should play a bigger role in the field of development. It should create a fair and equitable framework to assess progress in meeting the MDGs and ensure that the United Nations Foundation and the various United Nations programmes and specialized agencies provide greater support for capacity-building programmes in developing countries. It should enhance coordination between international development policy and monetary, financial and trading regimes and create an enabling international environment for developing countries.

The suspension of the Doha round serves nobody's interests. Members of the World Trade Organization should demonstrate political will, speedily resume the Doha development round and work towards a comprehensive and balanced outcome.

Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to be more extensively and deeply involved in development cooperation. Their efforts and those of Governments should complement each other.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council echoes the calling of our times. Member States have a common responsibility to make the Council a dynamic and effective body. The Council should give greater attention to massive and gross violations of human rights caused by armed conflicts and should support the international community in its efforts to prevent conflicts, restore peace and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The Council should attach equal importance to economic, social and cultural rights and encourage the international community and United Nations agencies to take effective measures to support countries in their efforts to realize their right to development.

The Council should continue to give special attention to the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups to ensure that they enjoy the same level of respect as others.

The Council should promote dialogue and cooperation on an equal footing between countries of different social systems and levels of development, address human rights issues properly and reject double standards and politicization.

For decades, relations between China and African countries have been characterized by sincerity and mutual support. We have conducted our cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, while safeguarding sovereignty and independence and promoting social and economic development in our respective countries. All that has served to bring about significant benefits for the Chinese and African peoples alike.

China and Africa will hold a summit and the third ministerial meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing from 3 to 5 November. Focusing on the theme of friendship, peace, cooperation and development, Chinese and African leaders will discuss ways to establish and foster a new type of strategic partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation and cultural exchanges. They will also draft a blueprint to enhance China-Africa cooperation. China is committed to peaceful development. Africa, which is home to the largest number of developing countries, is committed to achieving stability and renewal. Stronger ties between China and Africa will contribute to South-South cooperation and international peace and development.

The conduct of China's diplomacy aims to safeguard world peace and promote common development. China is committed to developing itself through safeguarding and promoting world peace through its own development. We are pursuing development that is peaceful, inclusive, cooperative and harmonious in nature. We will endeavour to promote the fundamental interests of our own people in harmony with the common interests of other peoples and to pursue peace, promote development and resolve disputes through cooperation.

China is dedicated to building a harmonious world. It hopes to increase mutual respect and understanding with other countries and to live in harmony with them. China respects the right of a country to choose its own path to development. It supports equal participation by different countries in international affairs and democracy in international relations. It works to enhance mutual benefits, win-win outcomes and global prosperity through sharing the benefits of economic globalization and technological progress. China seeks to promote a diversified world and advance human civilization by furthering dialogue, understanding and mutual enrichment between different cultures. China is committed to advancing human progress by enhancing dialogue, building mutual trust with other countries and working with them to address global issues.

China will continue to demonstrate to the world that it is an important force for global peace and development and that the Chinese people will remain trustworthy friends and cooperation partners to the world's peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): The global game has changed. Interdependence and globalization are occurring at an unprecedented speed. With globalization, the concept of national sovereignty has changed. The international order based on the nation State — established in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia — is being challenged. Non-State actors are becoming more and more influential on the global scene. Private militias and transnational criminal movements are increasingly responsible for conflicts that used to be between State actors, as well as for undermining agreements entered into and adhered to by States.

The boundaries between domestic and foreign policy are changing. Developments in one part of the world often trigger unintended actions in other parts of the world. If we look the other way when faced with conflicts and human suffering, problems will grow, they will not disappear. To meet the goals and challenges confronting the global community, we need more than ever a dynamic and proactive United Nations.

The United Nations has to proactively address the agenda set by globalization, and it must be able to change in order to effectively meet and deliver on the new challenges. It is in everybody's interest to have an efficient United Nations. The Organization adds moral force to the international community's actions in a globalized world. An effective United Nations can alleviate the negative effects of globalization and turn it into a positive force. All of us have to work to ensure that the necessary reform steps to be initiated.

Last September's World Summit set an ambitious agenda for the United Nations and the General Assembly. I am pleased that we have achieved

considerable results. Prominent examples include the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund. The two new organs represent a long overdue institutional modernization of the United Nations that, if used as intended, will help the United Nations to address new challenges. That is why Denmark has put so much effort into helping to foster the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

With Burundi and Sierra Leone on the agenda, the Peacebuilding Commission has chosen two nations in need, but also two nations willing to join forces with the international community in their endeavour to build their nations.

As it should, the Human Rights Council allows for closer scrutiny by the international community of domestic affairs — not because we wish to punish but because we wish to help improve. Such scrutiny is a desirable monitoring mechanism to ensure the protection of people from abuse by their own Governments. Let us avoid politicizing the work of this new body and instead, in a spirit of cooperation, ensure that the Human Rights Council is successful in meeting the objectives laid down by the General Assembly. In that context, I would also like to draw attention to the decision by the Human Rights Council to recommend to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly the adoption of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Work on the draft declaration has been under way for more than 20 years. It is high time that we, the Governments, approve that landmark instrument aimed at furthering the rights and aspirations of the world's indigenous peoples.

In June, as President of the Security Council, Denmark sought to highlight the importance of strengthening international law. We picked up the torch from the 2005 World Summit by calling a special meeting on the critical role of international law in fostering stability and order in international relations (see S/PV.5474). The Security Council spoke out clearly in favour of international law, both in general terms and with regard to specific topics such as delisting with respect to sanctions. Denmark will continue to pursue those topics, and we call upon all Member States to join us.

The reform agenda is far from exhausted. The Security Council should be reformed to better reflect the world of today. Furthermore, we need to make substantial progress on mandate review and management reform during this session of the General Assembly. Otherwise, we will not be able to meet the challenges. Member States should not micromanage the United Nations, but should build a strong and fast-responding Organization to meet new challenges.

The United Nations must play a strong role in order to secure positive gains from globalization for developing countries. Denmark eagerly looks forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Our aim is to enhance on the ground the efficiency and impact of United Nations development cooperation.

It is a cause for concern that we have witnessed the resurgence of the notion of respect for national sovereignty as a justification for inaction in international affairs. There is of course no denying that nation-States remain the constituent part of the international system and of this very Organization. But respect for sovereignty can never become an excuse for accepting massive human rights violations. That was the key message from the Summit last year, when heads of State pronounced their support for the notion of the responsibility to protect.

The Security Council has consistently worked to uphold the sovereignty of Lebanon since 2004. In August of this year, the Council intervened to stop the war between Hizbollah and Israel, and decided to send thousands of peacekeepers to help the Lebanese Government extent its authority to all parts of the country. We call upon all regional players to work constructively towards that goal. Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) must be fully respected by all parties. Denmark is actively considering ways to promote the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including by assisting the Secretary-General in his endeavours to find ways forward on the political aspects.

The war between Hizbollah and Israel proved the volatility of the Middle East. For decades, the international community has sought to address the Arab-Israeli conflict, which continues to breed hatred and fanaticism. We must support moderate forces for reform and empower them to stand up against centrifugal tendencies. We need to redouble our efforts to finally achieve a comprehensive and lasting two-State solution to that tragic conflict. It is in nobody's

interest that the instability in the Middle East continues.

The same goes for the Sudan. The Council's decision last month to continue preparations for a United Nations peacekeeping force to relieve the African Union force and stop the senseless carnage of civilians in Darfur drew sharp criticism from the Government of the Sudan and was denounced as neo-colonialism and a violation of its sovereign rights. But, I ask, whose rights are really being violated here? Rather than the rights of the Government of the Sudan, I submit that it is the right of the population of Darfur to receive protection that is being violated. It is incumbent upon the international community to act if a Government fails to fulfil the responsibility to protect. I call upon the Government of the Sudan to work with us, not against us, in protecting the population of Darfur.

In Afghanistan the security situation continues to be of great concern. We are, individually and collectively, being tested on our commitment to assist the Afghan people on their path towards a just and prosperous future. Warlords, financed by the opium trade, threaten the democratic rights of the people. The United Nations must continue to support the remarkable transformation process undertaken by the Afghan people and their Government.

We wish to see a stronger role for the United Nations in Iraq, in order to contribute to peaceful and democratic development. A necessary precondition to improve the situation is better living conditions for all in Iraq. Needless to say, it is in our common interest to assist the Iraqi people in their struggle to reform and build their country. It must not fall victim to sectarianism and terrorism. If that happens the whole region will become destabilized.

The most serious danger associated with globalization is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council reacted in unity to deplore the 4 July launch of several missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call upon Pyongyang to return to the Six-Party Talks.

Iran has failed to respond to the demands of the Security Council. We call upon Tehran to suspend enrichment activities and accept negotiations on the generous package.

Weapons of mass destruction and terrorism represent a deadly combination. Terrorism is already in itself one of the major threats to international peace and stability. We all remember the tragedies here in the United States five years ago, as well as the terrorist attacks in London, Madrid, Amman, Bali, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. I am very pleased that the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) has now been adopted by the General Assembly. That gives us renewed hope that we may also conclude the negotiations on a comprehensive convention this year. I call upon all States to seriously attempt to bridge the differing views that exist with regard to that very important convention, in order that we can combat the scourge of our time, terrorism.

As Chairman of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, Denmark is working towards the strengthening of the international fight against terrorism through improved cooperation between the Council and Member States.

Let me conclude my statement by expressing Denmark's sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts to promote a more just, prosperous and peaceful world and for his leadership of the United Nations. For almost 10 years, Kofi Annan has served in an office where expectations for action are not always matched by the requisite powers and the means to act. He has impressively carried a heavy burden through troubled times, and recently has even undertaken new challenges in the Middle East and in the world at large. His act will be a difficult one to follow. Let his heritage be that the stones he lifted do not roll back down the mountain.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure, Madam, to extend my warmest congratulations to you and your country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am fully confident that your vast experience will guide the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion. Allow me to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session.

I would also like to commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his efforts to equip this

Organization with the appropriate tools to properly respond to world events and challenges.

This session is convening in difficult times and amid important changes. Despite the successes achieved by the United Nations in establishing the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund, numerous dangers and challenges still lie ahead. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains very tense as a result of Israel's actions, including killing, terrorizing, collective punishment, the demolition of homes and other practices that run counter to the noble objectives of the peace process. There are requirements and obligations that must be fulfilled in order to reach a peaceful settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Hence, we express our support for the call by the League of Arab States to refer the entire Arab-Israeli conflict to the Security Council, in order to find a lasting, comprehensive and peaceful settlement. That call reaffirms the commitment of the Arab States to peace — as a strategic option and a basis for peaceful coexistence between the Arab countries and the State of Israel as envisioned in the Arab peace initiative.

The world has recently witnessed the tragedy of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, with the resulting destruction and huge loss of life and property. We affirm our support to the brotherly Lebanese people in that brutal crisis. We welcome the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1701 (2006) and hope that it will enhance security and stability in the region. The positive response to the Secretary-General's call for greater participation in the enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is a clear indication of the support the international community accords to Lebanon.

My country is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation and the internal violence in Iraq. We call upon all parties in Iraq to give precedence to their national interests and to support their National Government in accordance with a conciliatory political programme that would look after the interests of all segments of the Iraqi people.

We welcome the conclusion of the Abuja Peace Agreement between the Sudanese Government and the rebel groups, and we hope that it will stop further bloodshed among the brotherly Sudanese people. We look forward to seeing a positive and effective role by the Security Council in the Sudan, in cooperation with the Sudanese Government.

Although the African continent enjoys immense natural and human resources and potential, it is plagued by conflict, the spread of disease and poverty. While we support the efforts of the African Governments to deal with those difficulties, we also call upon the international community to do all it can to help the African countries to reinforce their efforts.

Environment is the common heritage of all mankind. Conserving the environment is therefore a duty shared by all countries, and we hope that during this session further light will be shed on environmental issues. Aware of the importance of striking a balance between achieving development, on the one hand, and protecting the environment, on the other, my country has launched a national strategy aimed at protecting the environment that incorporates environmental considerations at all stages of planning.

We are making concerted efforts to protect our environment, our territorial waters and our economic areas from pollution. We are also cooperating with a number of national, regional and international organizations and agencies in protecting our natural resources and preventing their deterioration.

All are agreed that globalization has positive aspects. However, it has been noted that in some cases globalization has hurt the interests of developing countries. For that reason, my country supports the call for the establishment of a world trade order that is non-discriminatory and multidisciplinary. Such a framework would seek to achieve a balanced outcome in the decisions of the Doha Round of negotiations. It is our hope that current negotiations on multilateral trade issues, especially those related to agriculture and the service sector, will achieve success in a way that serves the interests and rights of all States equally.

We look forward to seeing the international financial, economic and trade institutions play a positive role in bridging the growth gap between developed and developing countries. We urge those institutions to provide support to developing countries to help them to attract investment funds and to gain access to global markets for their exports, without any restrictions or protectionist measures. In this regard, we welcome the offer of the brotherly State of Qatar to host the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2007.

My country supports the call for a review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) with a view to closing loopholes in the Treaty and guaranteeing the right of all States parties to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. While we favour a Middle East region free from all weapons of mass destruction, we also call on all parties to the current talks on the Iranian nuclear issue to keep the door open to negotiation, since direct dialogue remains the best way of reaching a suitable compromise on pending contested issues.

An effective international counter-terrorism strategy requires a balance to be struck between security considerations and respect for human rights conventions. It is really not wise to endanger the security and stability of States on the ground of combating terrorism, nor is it fair to subject innocent people to injustice or mistreatment on the basis of mere suspicion.

Bearing in mind that human beings are the centre and focus of development, my country has designed policies aimed at the self-fulfilment of Omani citizens and the development of their potential. Social welfare programmes for individuals with special needs are a key element in the rehabilitation of those groups, so that they can participate in society alongside other citizens. In cooperation with the International Labour Organization, my country has also adopted a rehabilitation strategy focusing on local communities.

Emphasizing the comprehensive nature of the development process, my country has devoted special attention to the role of women by encouraging them to participate in development. We have introduced a draft national strategy for the advancement of women, which is the result of cooperation between governmental bodies and civil society organizations.

The Sultanate of Oman takes pride in its achievements in the area of childcare. Because of the importance of childhood in securing out investment in human resources, children are given priority in our comprehensive development programme. Our national committee for child protection and welfare was established by Royal Decree No. 71 of 1997.

Today, more than ever before, we need an effective United Nations that is able to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That can be achieved only through concerted efforts and political will on the part of Member States, which will enable the Organization to carry out its mission and responsibilities in the best possible manner.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Steinmeier (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): Please accept my congratulations, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I wish you every success. I should also like to express my sincere thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session for his dedicated work and to wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The world events that have taken place over the past 60 years are reflected more graphically in Germany than in almost any other country. Until 1989, the wall and the barbed wire across our country symbolized the division of Europe and the rest of the world into two blocs. Since then, Germany has become the embodiment of the successful overcoming of that division.

Both division and the overcoming of division have influenced our view of the world. For 45 years, peace in Germany was due largely to the friendship and the political and military protection of partner countries, which took their responsibility seriously. That experience shaped the political outlook of Germans. That is why we, too, are now shouldering our responsibility, both in Europe and in other parts of the world. In the context of the United Nations, that means that a reunited Germany believes it has an obligation to do everything it can to support the Organization in creating a more peaceful and more equitable world.

German soldiers and police officers are taking part in numerous peace missions that are either led or mandated by the United Nations. In the Western Balkans, Germany has provided the largest contingent of peacekeeping troops in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Germany is playing a prominent role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Germany is leading the European operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is supporting the first free elections there in 40 years. Germany is engaged in the Sudan through its support for the African Union Mission in the Sudan and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan. And, at this very moment, German navy vessels

are on their way to the Lebanese coast, where they will reinforce the United Nations peacekeeping force. Germany will contribute up to 2,400 troops to that peace mission.

Germany supports a policy of dialogue and the peaceful reconciliation of differing interests. We firmly believe that political conflicts cannot be resolved through military force or military victories. Peace is brought about by engaging in political dialogue, establishing economic ties and giving people tangible hope for the future. If the parties to a conflict are unable to overcome political divisions on their own, the international community, represented by the United Nations, has an obligation to help. That is the guiding principle of our foreign policy.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs of a reunited Germany, I have been profoundly influenced by German and European history. On that basis, I have a concrete mandate for German foreign policy: we must do everything in our power to prevent the world from dividing once again into hostile blocs. Politicians in every country have a responsibility in that regard. Everyone can — and, I believe, everyone must — make a contribution. It is my firm conviction that anyone who instigates antagonism between people of different cultures and religions is not living up to his or her responsibility.

No one should interpret the involvement of Germany and its partners in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in the Sudan and in Lebanon as an aggressive global campaign waged by the West against Islam. In a world that has grown closer together than ever before, we do not need exclusion or polarization. Rather, we need the courage to promote understanding and to engage in dialogue.

In the Middle East, it is crucial, following Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), on Lebanon, that we seize the opportunity to promote understanding. I call on all parties to the conflict in the region to act responsibly. Those who want their children and grandchildren to live in peace instead of violence, in safety instead of fear, in prosperity instead of poverty, must have the courage to embark on new paths rather than simply cultivating long-standing enmities.

The principles for a settlement are clear: Israel's right to exist, on the one hand, and the establishment of a Palestinian State, on the other. Those were the core concerns of the Road Map, to which, I am firmly convinced, we must return. However, if we are to ensure lasting success, we must do everything we can to include everyone involved, even if that seems a roundabout way to achieve our goal. Therefore, I hope that we will succeed in persuading Syria to engage in a constructive dialogue. We need stronger engagement on the part of the international community, particularly the Middle East Quartet. I welcome the Quartet's recent meeting.

In Afghanistan, the international community is demonstrating how the principle of responsibility can be put into practice in concrete terms. After 23 years of civil war, political structures are now being developed. Millions of refugees have returned to their home country. Just as important, young people — including girls — can go to school again. However, drug cultivation and the security situation pose a threat to the progress that has been made, at least in certain regions of the country. We, the international community cannot allow the successes to date to be brought to naught.

In the Western Balkans, too, war is a thing of the past; I am very pleased to note that that is so. The political and military commitment of the United Nations, the United States of America, Russia and the European Union has played a key role in this. In Kosovo, the task now is to ensure that the two parties to the conflict take their responsibility for peace and stability seriously. A solution to the status of Kosovo, which has remained unresolved for many years, is overdue. Germany staunchly backs the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy, President Martti Ahtisaari. We believe that stability cannot be achieved if the will of only the majority population of Kosovo is expressed. Kosovo Serbs must be guaranteed adequate protections as a minority.

[redacted] need only glance at a map of Africa to understand how important the peace and stability of the Sudan and the Congo are for the African continent as a whole. I believe that instability and conflicts in Africa also have a direct impact on Europe. For this reason, too, Germany is supporting the United Nations in its efforts to find a solution to the conflicts in those two countries.

While the United Nations peace mission in southern Sudan — the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) — has made an effective contribution

towards the implementation of the Peace Agreement between northern and southern Sudan, peace in Darfur is still a long way off. Neither the Sudanese Government nor rebel groups can be absolved of responsibility for the humanitarian disaster in the west of the country. Nevertheless, I am firmly convinced that a lasting solution to the conflict will be possible only if we work with, not against, them.

As members are aware, over the past few years Germany, together with France and Britain, supported by the United States of America, Russia and China, has been intensively seeking a solution to the conflict regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Let me state clearly that no one wants to deny Iran the right to use nuclear energy peacefully. Nor is isolating Iran the objective of the diplomatic effort. On the contrary, we hope that Iran will become a reliable and responsible partner in the crisis-stricken Middle East. That is why, on 6 June, we offered Iran a package aimed at far-reaching cooperation. The package includes proposals for closer diplomatic, economic and security cooperation, and expressly acknowledges Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

However, the international community also rightly expects cooperation and transparency from Iran. If Iran were to prove that the suspicions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are unfounded and if it sent a clear sign that it truly intends to use its nuclear programme for peaceful purposes only, that could open the door to a development which benefits the people of Iran and the entire region.

It is now up to the Government in Tehran to face up to its responsibility. The decision in favour of peace and stability in the entire Middle East requires courage. I call upon Iran to end the current phase of procrastination and give a clear sign of trust so that we can look to the future together and can finally sit down at the negotiating table.

Resolution of the nuclear dispute with Iran is urgent. However, the challenges of the proliferation of nuclear weapons go far beyond that. We must act now if we want to halt the erosion of the non-proliferation regime. The next attempt to implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must not fail.

Not only Iran but also other countries are thinking about developing enrichment technology. We will have to develop new instruments if we want to prevent such risks from arising.

I am therefore strongly in favour of not merely exchanging ideas on the multilateralization of the fuel cycle and transferring responsibility for uranium enrichment to the international community, but of further developing such ideas into concrete options. I therefore appeal for greater efforts to find solutions, working together with the IAEA.

The conflicts in the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Western Balkans and the Sudan, and the dispute with Iran, as well as the fight against international terrorism, have one thing in common: in none of those cases is the West taking a hostile stance against Islam. Nor do they involve a clash of civilizations. Rather, they are very diverse conflicts involving diverse interests.

I believe that there is just one link, albeit a very different one: each one of those conflicts can be resolved only with a willingness and ability to engage in dialogue. That is because dialogue gets everyone concerned involved, engages them and does not allow them to shirk their responsibility for resolving a conflict. However, a policy of cooperation and dialogue does not mean talking at any cost. Those who want to engage in dialogue must meet some basic prerequisites. In my view, these include a readiness to bring about a peaceful reconciliation of interests — that is to say, they must be prepared to renounce violence and respect the position of the other side — and their own position must be consistent and credible. If these prerequisites are not met, then no dialogue with any chance of success can get off the ground.

I am firmly convinced that a dialogue beyond cultural borders can succeed because, despite all of our differences, we are living in one world. The various cultures of the world have more in common than political rabble-rousers would have us believe. People everywhere have the same fundamental interests: they want to live in peace and security, free from poverty. They want good health care and good schools for their children. No responsible Government would ever want to withhold these from its people — nor should they ever be allowed to try to do so.

The United Nations and its agencies and programmes embody this vision — and it is this vision that makes the United Nations so indispensable. I am convinced that we will need the United Nations more than ever in the coming decades. The number and the

scale of crises in the world are increasing. That could bring about a renaissance of the United Nations even in countries that are sometimes still sceptical about the world Organization.

The effectiveness of the United Nations, its ability to act and the confidence it inspires as the international community's main multilateral Organization are closely connected. Everyone can see how necessary transparent structures and effective institutions are for the United Nations. The reform of the United Nations — the entire Organization, not just the Security Council — should not, therefore, simply remain on the agenda; concrete progress must be made.

We see the expectations placed on the United Nations rising. This is especially urgent in the case of the review of mandates, as well as management and financial reform. Germany pledges to support this endeavour, because we must reform if we, as members of the international community, wish to remain effective. We owe that not only to the United Nations but, above all, to the people in whose name we shoulder responsibility together.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Rita Kieber-Beck, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein.

Mrs. Kieber-Beck (Liechtenstein): Madam President, let me first of all express my happiness at seeing you preside over the General Assembly. Your election sends a clear signal concerning the ever-stronger participation of women in decision-making processes worldwide. We value your impressive track record on women's rights in particular, and we will assist you in every possible way in the fulfilment of your difficult task.

We can take pride in the many accomplishments achieved during the past session, most prominently the establishment of the Human Rights Council and of the Peacebuilding Commission. These are important institutional advances which offer us a real opportunity to do things differently and to do them better. They do not, however, automatically guarantee the results that we had in mind when we made the decision that new institutions were needed. No structural change, however skilfully crafted, can bring about substantive change in and of itself. In the area of human rights in particular, we must increase our efforts in order to create the truly new international discourse that is needed, based on cooperation and the even-handed implementation of international standards. Only a new partnership in the field of human rights, with the full participation of all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, can ensure that people worldwide enjoy all the human rights to which they are entitled. It is only through such a new partnership that we will be able to make the quantum leap towards an era of implementation.

One of the major issues that we did not resolve following the World Summit in September 2005 is Security Council reform. Here again, we are of the view that structural change is needed but that it is not sufficient in itself. On the one hand, the Council must be given a new structure and a different composition in order to maintain its credibility worldwide. It must better reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century, which are fundamentally different from those that prevailed at the time of the creation of the Organization. But we must also address the equally urgent necessity to improve the way in which the Council goes about its daily business.

Time and again we have witnessed occasions on which the Council did not live up to its mandate, as enshrined in the Charter, to act on behalf of the membership as a whole. A better representation of the views of the general membership is therefore essential for its effectiveness and credibility, in particular through a stronger involvement on the part of non-members of the Council that have a particular interest in, or expertise on, a given subject. We are satisfied to see that the Council has taken a step in the right direction in that regard, and we will remain committed to helping to improve its working methods.

Working methods and enlargement are clearly complementary elements of Security Council reform. It would appear that, after a pause of more than a year, it is time to try our hand again at expanding the Council, preferably through a sober approach that takes into account the experiences gained in 2005.

Like many before me, I would like to applaud Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his outstanding tenure at the helm of the Organization. One key element of his legacy is the high priority he has attached to the rule of law. We agree that the core strength of the United Nations is its solid grounding in international law, its proud track record in promoting international law, and the unique legitimacy it can provide in making decisions. In our globalized world,

in which non-State actors play an ever-increasing role, clear rules are needed which are applied equally to everyone, in a transparent manner.

However, we have yet to witness the advent of an era of the rule of law, as called for by the Secretary-General. On the contrary, we have witnessed a dangerous erosion of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and we must urgently find ways to place the issue of the rule of law high on the agenda of the Organization. We will work with others to ensure that the General Assembly makes concrete progress on this matter during this session.

While there are negative trends in the area of respect for international law, we have made some significant advances, in particular in the area of international justice. It is now commonly understood that there can be no impunity for international crimes and that no one who has committed them is immune. This is a historic development which has found its most powerful expression in the establishment of the International Criminal Court. The Court is now seized of three situations, one of which was referred to it by the Security Council, and more than 100 States have become parties to the Rome Statute. This very strong momentum can be maintained only if States and, indeed, the Organization lend their active support to a judicial institution which fully relies on such cooperation in gathering evidence and arresting indictees. Most importantly, we must realize that peace and justice are, in the long run, complementary concepts, and we must uphold the principle that there can be no amnesty for the worst crimes under international law.

The international fight against terrorism poses a particularly complex challenge in the area of the rule of law. First, we must complement the existing international legal framework by adopting a comprehensive convention against terrorism. We have put forward our ideas in this respect and hope that they can help in reaching an agreement, which is long overdue. Secondly, it must be clear that the fight against terrorism and the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Human rights are at the core of the value system of the international community, as we all recognized at the Summit last year. Curtailing them in the name of the fight against terrorism would therefore play into the hands of terrorists, who fight this very system with fanatic zeal. Last but not least, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, must lead by example in upholding due process and the rights of individuals.

When I spoke in this Hall last year, I presented a mixed assessment of the outcome of the World Summit. On the one hand, I expressed disappointment at the vagueness or even complete absence of some aspects of United Nations reform, but I also warmly welcomed some real advances. The recognition of the responsibility to protect constituted such an advance; indeed, it was a real milestone in the Outcome Document. Today, we must acknowledge that the international community has not followed up the commitment it made at the World Summit with concrete action.

The situation in Darfur, irrespective of the definition of the crime in question, clearly falls within the scope of the responsibility to protect, but we have yet to see the action necessary in accordance with our common commitment to protect civilian populations.

The United Nations, in spite of its shortcomings, remains the only such Organization of global reach and is uniquely placed to address the complex challenges the world is facing today. However, it will be capable of living up to this role only if we re-establish the institutional balance within the system. In particular, the General Assembly must reassert its role as a central policymaking body and work on a par with the Security Council.

The most prominent topics for the Organization in the coming weeks are clear: the situation in Darfur, the Middle East, the nuclear programme of Iran and the appointment of a new Secretary-General. All these topics are dealt with in the Security Council, while the General Assembly plays at best a secondary role. The Assembly must, therefore, address in parallel, and make progress on, the development agenda in all its aspects, system-wide coherence, disarmament, Security Council reform and other priority areas of the work of the organization. A better division of work between the two most important organs will make the Organization as a whole more effective and more efficient. It is, therefore, in the common interest of all States to make the General Assembly the central policymaking body it was designed to be by the founding fathers.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.